BULLETIN FROM

Virginia Kirkus' Bookshop Service 439 East 51st Street

April 1, 1937

SUPPLEMENT ON FOREIGN BOOKS

In cooperation with the dealer, B. Westermann Company, Inc., 24 West 48th Street, New York, these titles in French, German, Italian, and Russian have been selected for individual or group reading. The prices are necessarily tentative. Further information about these and other titles can be obtained from Westermann's. The Spanish books may be obtained from Libreria Gomez at 47 Seventh Avenue, New York. This list is suggested simply as a nucleus, and the information given about the individual titles is intended as a guide for selling. Plus sales might be secured through calling this service to the attention of your customers who are interested in foreign books.

FRENCH BOOKS

Aragon, Louis — **LES BEAUX QUARTIERS** *(Residential Sections)* — Denoel & Steele

* *Prix Renaudot* - and almost too ambitious in scope and canvas, covering the political and social history of France from 1900 to 1912, cross-sectioning the various strata of bourgeois society both in a large commercial town and later Paris, and presenting a dozen major characters with a supporting cast of forty odd. Aragon can in many ways be paralleled to Zola - his tremendous kaleidoscope, his epic power in vivifying mob scenes, cities, etc., and his naturalistic tendency to portray gross and unrestrained appetities, hypocrisies, greed, all latent under different disguises. Here with a socialist banner he offers a solution to this chaotic social picture. However, the result is somewhat uncoordinated. Whereas in the first part he introduces a great many trenchant bits of portraiture and one outstanding character, he loses sight of them on shifting the scene to Paris, sacrificing his most interesting conception. Nevertheless, despite its confusion, the book has power in its mordant irony, sound realism, and vitality. About $1.50

Benda, Julien — **LA JEUNESSE D'UN CLERC** *(The Youth of a Scholar)* — Gallimard

* An autobiographical study dealing with the formation of a mind of unusual insight and precision, and a typically French one. "Inhuman rationalist" most completely categorizes Mr. Benda as he appears in this detailed, mental self-analysis, tracing the various stages of his development, the influences of his family, French classical education, etc. He never tends to praise or deprecate himself - he states what he is and why he is with amazing clarity and impersonality. Thoughtful reading but lucrative. About $1.00

Benoit, Pierre — **SAINT JEAN D'ACRE** — Albin Michel

A long short story and a picturesque one, the story of the Napoleonic envoy and his strange mission during the famous siege at Acre. Three shorter stories follow, equally fanciful and entertaining. All are effectively built up with a clever finale. For lighter moments - but not without charm. About $1.00

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Canu, Jean **LA BASSE NORMANDIE** J. de Gigord
(Low Normandy)

A thorough and yet colorful study of Low Normandy, which seems all inclusive when the material covered is summed up. Geographical and topographical data, historical background, architecture, farming life, legends, etc., all play a part, as the author goes from the agricultural sections, Lisieux, Ange, and Alencon, to the sea towns. The narration is strictly impersonal and informative with little anecdotal material, but reveals his complete knowledge of the country and the people. A valuable book and an attractive one, with exceptional photographs. About $1.00

Celine, Louis-Ferdinand **MEA CULPA** Denoel & Steele

A brief essay on communism, which is in the nature of a diatribe and convincing in so far as it goes. This is followed by his medical thesis, a biographical study of Semmelweis, who fifty years before Pasteur curbed puerperal fever by the use of antiseptics. It's an interesting narrative, revealing Celine to be something other than an ultra-naturalistic and sordid novelist. Although the appeal here is far more limited than anything he has done, both are too well written to be casually passed up.
About $ .50

Cocteau, Jean **MON PREMIER VOYAGE: TOUR DU MONDE EN 80 JOURS** Gallimard
(My First Voyage: Around the World in 80 Days)

* To celebrate the centenary of Jules Verne, Cocteau sets out to pattern his mythical Phileas Fogg and tour the world in eighty days. An hour here and an hour there, but sufficient to record his very sensitive reactions to far-away places. He has an amazing knack of animating the inanimate, of personifying a city, a relic, a street. There is no adventure element to speak of - it is purely a succession of impressions rendered in unusually flexible prose with a frequent philosophical comment, and consistent keen perceptivity. About $ .85

Hervieu, Louise **SANGS** Denoel & Steele
(Bloods)

*** Though the theme of this *Femina* prize novel may be antipathetic if not repellent to some, - the transmission of a social disease down through several generations, - it is handled with such sympathy and delicacy that the tragedy is at all times moving. To counterbalance the sordid legacy which inevitably recurs, whether as a physical or mental or moral taint, there is the fine portrait of a Norman peasant. Stoic, intelligent, tender, Hurel is doomed to his perpetual strife against insanity and intemperance, a succession of ordeals imposed by the ignorance and inarticulateness of his race and era. Particularly tragic is the story of the little granddaughter, the frail *enfant dupée*. In addition, there is the skillful delineation of the Norman peasant scene, the flavor of their dialect, the daily routine of master and servant, etc. It's a powerful book in its social implications as well as its individual tragedies, in its psychological depth, and in the sobriety of the narration.
About $1.25

Mazeline, Guy **BETAFEU** Gallimard

A light novel, occasionally mystifying, dealing with the love of a soldier which is frustrated by his bastard child, Betafeu. Diabolical, perverse, tormented and tormenting, he appears from nowhere and disappears again, taking his father with him, revealing the indissoluble tie between them. There's something very appealing

about this waif, his insecurity, his idolatrous and possessive love for his father, his frenetic jealousy which motivates the conclusion. The other characters are a little pallid in comparison, and the total effect is somewhat insubstantial, but it's engrossing reading nonetheless. About $1.00

Peyre, J. L'HOMME DE CHOC Bernard Grasset
(Shock Trooper)

Last year's Goncourt novelist returns with another novel set in Spain, but a far slighter one in ultimate value. This is a brief picture of the Asturian revolt in 1934, when the mine workers made their short-lived attempt for power. The book is flimsy - the characterization scant and the social implication not particularly forceful. However, Peyre knows and sets down the minutiae of this rebellion, from its inception in the mines to the annilihation at Oviedo, as authentically as in his bullfighting scene in *Sangs et Lumieres*. This has a certain timeliness as a prelude to the present Spanish war. About $1.00

Van Der Meersch, Maxence L'EMPREINTE D'UN DIEU Albin Michel
(The Imprint of a God)

*** The 1936 Goncourt prize which but for the setting in Flanders which he knows intimately, is quite dissimilar to *Invasion*. It is a far slighter book, of psychological import rather than sociological, concerned with individual destinies instead of a gigantic war-time fresco. This is chiefly the story of the author Van Bergen, a Titan both mentally and physically, vigorous, imaginative, magnetic, and benevolent, who dreams of leaving his imprint on the world through the masterpiece on which he is working. His premature death frustrates him here, but his aim is fulfilled in the ineradicable stamp he leaves on the lives of the two women he loved. The characterization is perhaps too sharply divided, the two gargantuan male figures overshadowing the fragile, restrained women, but the contrast is effective. The shifting scenes, each landscape, each mood, are exceptional - and in particular the drear, fog-bound, degenerate No-Man's Land between France and Belgium. A distinguished piece of wofk, poetic and yet realistic, absorbing and moving, but with consistent delicacy and finish in the telling. About $1.00

GERMAN BOOKS

N.B. All these German books have been written under the Nazi régime and consequently seem deliberately to avoid any controversial material, social or political.

Pauli, H. TONI Paul Zsolnay Verlag

A beautiful picture of old Vienna, a century ago, and in particular the artistic milieu of that time. This forms the background for the love story of the poet Raimund and his companion Toni. These two figures stand out so clearly through the skillful delineation of the author that, in a sense, the book resembles an etching. A charming story deftly handled. About $1.50

Jensen, J. V. DR. RENAULTS VERSUCHUNG Bermann-Fischer Verlag.
(Dr. Renault's Trial) Berlin

A fantasy based on the theme that each human being lives on some time after death. Here the protagonist, Dr. Renault, finds himself on a world cruise, which enables him to see and understand the various aspects of life in all their beauty and ugliness with far keener perception. Fanciful and entertaining reading - yet fundamentally sage and true. About $1.50

Hofer, R. DAS LETZTE JAHR Verlag Ullstein--Berlin
(The Last Year)

The life and fate of the court poet Theodor Korner. First the gay and sparkling Vienna of 1812 and the hero with all life and success before him. Then

the war shatters all. Both peace and war times are beautifully drawn and treated by the author. The reader is held in suspense every minute. About $2.00

Korlin, A. M. **ISOLANTHIS** Gretklein & Co. - Leipzig

The history in novel form of cultures long disappeared, tracing the development and rise of the Posseidonians, shortly before the total disappearance of the Isle of Posseidonis, in 10,000 B.C. - The introduction of the romantic figure of the young Pharaoh and his love for the crown princess Isolanthis animates the historical background and results in an engrossing and vital piece of work as well as an instructive one. About $4.00

Schaeffer, A. **CARA** Rutten & Loening Verlag - Frankfurt

A modern psychological novel which, contrary to this author's habitual custom, uses a woman as the central figure. Cara represents the power to breach the everlasting gulf between man and woman. As previously, his characters are beautifully drawn, and, in addition, there are some amazing minute descriptions of both the tangible and the intangible. About $3.00

Birkenfeld, G. **DIE SCHWARZE KUNST** *(The Black Art)* Paul Neff - Verlag

*** Mr. Birkenfeld informs us in his brief foreword that he believes in writing a novel about an historical figure in two cases only, either when much is known about him, or scarcely anything. In this instance the latter applies, and the biography of Gutenberg, the "father of printing" is both fascinating and informative. The author has meticulously studied not only his character, but also the period, its history, customs, etc., drawing on contemporary German documents for his sources. Both the central characters, Gutenberg and his betrothed, Endel, and the secondary figures are carefully executed, his craftsmen and helpers, his rivals and foes. The plot is plausible and well-paced. The author succeeds in transporting the reader into the fifteenth century, with its faith and superstitions, medieval customs and progressive thought. A final chapter for the stickler, devoted to the authentic historical facts known about Gutenberg. About $1.85

ITALIAN BOOKS

Viola, C. J. **PRICO** Fratelli Traves Milano

** A psychological noevel of childhood and maturity, dealing with the development of the child Prico as he first senses and then consciously perceives and analyzes the growing breach between his family and himself. A sensitive and penetrating sequence of portraits of two generations. About $1.40

Vergani, O. **10, POVERO NEGRO** *(I, Poor Negro)* Fratelli Traves Milano

* The tragic and dynamic story of a Negro boy, who leaves his African tribe to go to a French colony where he is adopted by a Frenchwoman who takes him to Marseilles, only to lose him. After a period of bumming around here and there he goes into the ring and becomes a boxing champion, but unwilling to participate in fixed fights he is forced to leave and goes to America. Eventually he loses his mind, reverts to primitivism, and is killed upon his escape from an asylum. The hero is meant to be a representative type of his race, and his story is told with great understanding, subtlety, and humor. About $1.40

Sanminiatelli, B. GIOCHI DA RAGAZZI Valecchi
(Children's Games)

A story of two brothers set in modern Rome in an aristocratic family. After their adolescence and final maturity, one witnesses their undoing as their childhood pranks and games follow them, wreaking havoc and vengeance. Original, clever, and well-sustained reading. About $2.00

Martini, F. M. IL CHORE CHE M 'HOI DATO A. Mondadori
(The Heart You Gave Me)

** Another family story in the form of an autobiography. This is the study of a younger son who has inherited the jealousy of his father which he realizes after it becomes an abnormal, psychopathic tendency. The conflict within himself in his attempts to curb it and surmount it provide a stimulating and somewhat tragic analysis. About $2.00

Piccoli, V. L'INCOMPIUTO Fratelli Traves - Milano
(Interrupted)

The love, life, and death of a young, modern Italian girl, which is more the picture how an average Italian girl lives today than a story in itself. The camera-eye method is used, focussed on the quotidien events of a certain segment of life. Slight but entertaining. About $1.40

Crispolti, F. PIO IX, LEONE XIII Fratelli Traves - Milano
PIO X, BENEDETTO XV

* Four biographical sketches, which are primarily accounts of the period of their papal incumbency rather than individual biographies, treating the popes as officials and not personalities. The inclusion of the contemporary political and historical events as well as the religious ones makes it less limited.than it may sound. About $1.50

RUSSIAN BOOKS

Gull DZERGINSKY Paris 1936

The personality of Dzerginsky, head executioner and inquisitor during the first years of the bolshevik regime, is almost as colorful and inhuman as that of Torquemada, the Spanish inquisitor of the fifteenth century. Mr. Gull does not limit himself to Dzerginsky's wholesale butchery, but also includes that of his two disciples, Menginsky and Jagoda, almost equally fanatical. A horrible but accurate document of the Russian reign of terror. About $1.50

Zaitzeff, B. VALAAM Tallin

* Mr. Zaitzeff is a well known Russian emigré and author. In this book he gives us a delightful picture, both colorful and human, of the Isle of Valaam with its monasteries. He also shows us with what care and reverence Finland has dealt with this Russian "Holy Land". Appeal similar to that of In The Steps Of The Master. Excellent illustrations. About $1.50

SPANISH BOOKS

Wast, Hugo ORO Editores de Hugo Wast
(Gold)

A fantastic combination of international banking intrigue, Jewish ritual, alchemy, and the eternal triangle, against a Buenos Aires background. The fortunes

of an Argentinian house of Rothschild are followed through several generations, culminating in the conversion of a grandson to Christianity. The theory of the eventual domination of the world by the Jews is strongly played up, and the gold negotiations are ingeniously developed. Because the plot races along with movie technique this is lighter reading than the subject matter would indicate. Not quite up to the previous standard of this most popular South American novelist.

About $1.50

V. Carmen de Battle - editor CUENTOS ESPANOLES DE AUTORES CONTEMPORANEOS Libreria Cervantes
(Spanish Stories by Contemporary Authors)

Twenty-three short stories with a wide range of subject and treatment and a common denominator of fine style. Unamuno, Zamacois, Martinez Sierra and the other grand old men of Spanish letters are represented. The present confusion of the country is vaguely foreshadowed by several telling sketches of poverty, but on the whole we see here the detached viewpoint of traditional Spain. Complete bibliographies of the authors included make a valuable appendix. Through its unquestionable literary merit this may easily become a standard book in its field. Highly recommended. (Has also been published in French.) About $1.00

Novo, Salvador CONTINENTE VACIO Espasa Calpe
(Empty Continent)

A young Mexican intellectual's impressions of New York and the principal cities of South America. Although sometimes marred by triviality, a peculiar Mexican wit makes it entertaining, particularly the chapters on the United States. His discussion of Latin American literature gives a nice bird's eye view. Will appeal primarily to readers interested in Pan Americanism but is by no means propaganda.

About $1.25

Alvarez, Victoriano LA VIDA AZAROSA Y ROMANTICA DE CARLOS MARIA BUSTAMANTE Espasa Calpe
(The Hazardous and Romantic Life of Carlos Maria Bustamante)

This is a recent addition to an important series, *Spanish and Hispanic Biographies of the Nineteenth Century.* Bustamante, gazeteer, lawyer, and insurgent had an exciting career during the Mexican struggle for independence from Spain, and died after the war of 1848, of "passion of soul and patriotic sadness". Alvarez's unpretentious biographical method is curiously effective and he has let his subject speak for himself through his writings. A pleasant bypath for those who have gotten beyond the obvious in history or Mexico. About $1.25

Sierra, Martinez **CARTAS A LAS MUJERES DE ESPANA** Renaciminto
(Letters to the Women of Spain)

"Ignorance is the weakness of Spain" declares Sierra, and he tries to educate a little through this series of informal discussions, which contain much common sense clearly expressed. It's really a universal plea for scientific knowledge, social consciousness, and self-development for women, and he holds up American feminism as the most practical in the world. The author understands women well enough to make this an interesting book for men too. About $1.50

Barriobero, Eduardo **EL AIRON DE LOS TORRE-CUMBRE** Mundo Latino
(The Escutcheon of the Torre-Cumbre Family)

As gay as a red balloon this light novel would be promptly deflated by translation. A rich young man joins a genealogical society that in seven Boccaccian reports reveals the infidelities of his ancestresses. Hoping to escape the family fate he marries a convent maiden, and finds himself the eighth deceived husband of the line. Deftly written with satirical intentions but it's more fun taken straight. Not for Aunt Minnie and the children. About $1.50

It's interesting to note that the literary trend in Spain prior to the Revolution was toward political non-fiction, fewer novels having been published than ever before.